



News Release

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Sierra National Forest Fire Management Officer Joe Reyes Retires

Clovis, CA— As people move on from the Forest, they take with them an inestimable amount of knowledge and experience gained through years spent with the agency. Joe Reyes, or Chief 1 as he is also known, began his career 35 fire seasons ago in 1980. Joe has been the Sierra National Forest's Fire Management Officer since 2011, starting with the Forest in 1997 as Battalion Chief at Batterson Station in Oakhurst, CA. Joe then went on to work as the Fire Training Officer where he oversaw the fire apprentice and fire prevention programs in addition to coordinating fire training needs for the unit. As the Forest's Fire Management Officer Joe has also traveled to many countries, such as Mexico, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Bhutan and Brunei, to teach courses on the Incident Command System (ICS) to promote disaster preparedness.

As a manager, Joe has kept the lines of communication open and ensured this through a regular 'Chief's Meeting' with fire staff to ensure the Forest is aligned or follows as he puts it "a one Forest, one Fire program" approach. When asked what advice he would give to up-and-coming fire professionals, Joe said that he would encourage them to "find a job that you enjoy because we do not pay you enough to be miserable". Joe also encourages folks to move up to where they want to be. Even with so many fire assignments over the years and many memorable experiences from all over the country, Joe did not take long to recall the first time he saw a wildfire really take off. "On my second fire in the early 80's our crew was driving behind a convoy of other engines that were putting out fires along a road that an arsonist was starting ahead of us. When their engine pulled off to the side of the road to respond, I barely had time to put on my gear before the fire went from a small start to taking off over the ridge." Joe and his crew had to get back in the engine and chase the fire down from miles away to get ahead of it and quickly realized how the right mixture of fuels and wind conditions can just pick a fire up and make it take off, something that he was to see over and over again throughout his career.

The biggest change that Joe has observed in the fire organization revolves around the training and qualifications requirements and how this has been standardized to protect the integrity and safety of the fire management program. When asked how he would like to see the Forest in 10 years, he said he wants "to see more fire put on the ground" with prescribed burning.

Joe Reyes will be enjoying retirement's big adventure by continuing to assist with type one national emergency teams and type two (regional emergency teams), as an AD or "On Call" fire support. Joe

will also continue to teach and be a part of the Forest Service International Programs, with a trip to Ethiopia in the works and he may even “dip into private industry and try out leadership consulting” based on the principles of the Incident Command System. Joe Reyes retired from the Forest Service on January 2, 2015.

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